

DRIVING CONTRACT FOR NEW DRIVERS AND THEIR PARENTS

A Message to Teenagers and Their Parents Concerning Safe Driving in Maine

*From the Secretary of State
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While obtaining a driver's license is the dream of most teenagers, it can lead to a great amount of anxiety for many parents. For teenagers, a driver's license means freedom, fun, and becoming an adult. For most parents, this event brings images of speeding cars and motor vehicle crashes. There are good reasons to be concerned, as the current statistics regarding young drivers are sobering:

- **Teen drivers represent less than 3% of the licensed drivers in Maine, but account for approximately 12% of those with serious crash related injuries;**
- **More than 60 young drivers are injured each week in Maine;**
- **Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death of young people ages 15 to 24 in both Maine and the nation;**
- **In Maine, 15 to 24 year olds comprise 13% of all licensed drivers, but they are involved in 36% of all motor vehicle fatalities.**

Most fatalities and injuries among young drivers are the result of driver inexperience and risky driving behavior. Fortunately, both of these issues can be addressed and significantly reduced when parents take an active role in their teenagers' driver education.

Research indicates that parental involvement in a teen's driver education and training can have a significant impact on the success of a young driver on the road. This process is most successful when it is interactive--when parents and teenagers communicate with each other in a respectful and meaningful manner.

The process should begin when teens receive their permits and continue during the first several years the young drivers are on the road. However, for the first few years young people have their licenses, communications between parents and teens are often strained.

One way to increase and improve communication about driving behavior is with a driving contract. By outlining the duties and responsibilities required for operating a motor vehicle, a contract establishes the expectations or conditions the teenager and parent are expected to meet. The contract, therefore, attempts to minimize the ambiguities or misunderstandings that can breakdown vital communication and lead to tragic consequences.

We have provided a sample contract for your consideration. This contract may be changed to meet the needs of any family, and is intended only as a guide. Sections may be added or removed based upon a particular family's concerns.

Everyone involved in licensing young drivers wants them to be safe drivers. Recent improvements to the driver education program and the additional requirement of 35 hours of logged driving time prior to qualifying for a road test have been effective in placing better prepared young drivers on Maine's roadways. By opening up the lines of communication between parents and new drivers, we can reduce the tragedies that deprive young people of fulfilling of their potential.

Tips for Young Drivers

Drive sober - Maine has a 'zero tolerance' law regarding blood alcohol levels for anyone under 21 years old. It is illegal for anyone under 21 to drive with any amount of alcohol or drugs in their systems. A violation of this law will result in the loss of your license for a minimum of one year.

Wear your seat belt - Maine law requires all passengers and drivers to wear a seat belt when traveling in a vehicle on Maine's roadways. Drivers of all ages should only transport as many passengers as there are seat belts in their vehicle.

Focus on your driving - Keep your eyes on the road and distractions to a minimum. Make sure music volume levels allow you to hear traffic around you and any approaching emergency vehicles. **Maine law restricts who may be a passenger in a vehicle operated by newly licensed drivers under age 18.**

Drive defensively - Remember you are sharing the road with others. Avoid confrontations with other drivers. Drive in a predictable manner. Use your turn signals, yield to traffic when required and keep speed under the posted limits. Do not let anyone else drive your vehicle.

Tips for Parents

Talk to your new driver - Use this contract as an opportunity to talk to your new driver about the responsibilities that come with driving. Acknowledge this important first step in their passage to adulthood. Identify the corresponding duties that come with this new freedom.

Be sure your vehicle is safe to drive - Safe and responsible driving begins with a safe and reliable vehicle. For your safety and that of your new driver, make sure that the family vehicle is maintained regularly.

Set a good example - Drive the way you want your teen to drive. You will gain your teen's trust and increase your credibility by driving in a responsible manner. Your actions will speak louder than words.

Review insurance requirements - Discuss with your new driver the financial responsibilities of driving a vehicle and in particular the legal requirement of liability insurance for all drivers. Explain that drivers may have a legal and financial responsibility for their driving behavior.

YOUNG DRIVER - PARENT/GUARDIAN CONTRACT

We, _____ and _____
(Names of Parents or Guardian) (Name of Young Driver)
agree to the following conditions:

1. Young Driver's Responsibilities:

Initial all that apply

- _____ I will not let anyone else drive or use the vehicle entrusted to me.
- _____ I will not break driving laws. Any violations may result in a loss of vehicle privileges.
- _____ I will not consume drugs or alcohol in the vehicle or operate any vehicle under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs. Any violation will result in the loss of vehicle privileges.
- _____ Everyone in the vehicle must wear a seat belt and keep it fastened at all times.
- _____ I will state my destination and time of return prior to using any vehicle. I will notify my parents if I think I will be more than 30 minutes late.
- _____ I will not drive to endanger my life, the lives of my passengers, or anyone else on the road.

2. Costs and Maintenance of Vehicle.

_____ will be responsible for the following:
(Name of Young Driver)

Indicate dollar amount or percentage of cost

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| _____ Cost of vehicle | _____ Vehicle registration |
| _____ Cost of fuel | _____ Maintenance costs |
| _____ Damage to the vehicle | _____ Fines and penalties |
| _____ Insurance costs | _____ Other |

Check all that apply

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| _____ Checking the fluids regularly | _____ Do normal maintenance |
| _____ Inspecting tires and checking air pressure | _____ Clear or clean all windows |
| _____ Reporting unusual performance | _____ Report or re-fuel when gas |

tank is

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| _____ Keeping the interior and exterior clean | less than 1/4 full |
| _____ Other | |

3. Driving Privileges.

This portion of the contract may be used to outline any additional conditions or limits on the use of the vehicle as agreed to by teens and parents:

4. Parental Responsibilities.

Initial all that apply

- _____ I will listen in a respectful manner to explanations or concerns expressed by my young driver regarding the operation of a vehicle or the terms of the contract.
- _____ I will provide respectful feedback when accompanying my young driver in a motor vehicle.
- _____ I will serve as a good role model when operating a vehicle and teach good driving skills and habits to my young driver.

5. Operator Impairment as a Result of Alcohol and Illicit Drugs.

A. Young Driver's Responsibility. I will not get into the vehicle of a driver who has been drinking or using illicit drugs, I will seek alternate transportation or I will call you for advice and/or transportation at any hour from any place. I have discussed with you and fully understand your feelings regarding underage drinking and the use of illegal drugs. _____ (Initial)

B. Parent or Guardian's Responsibility. I (We) agree to come and get you at any hour, from any place, with no questions asked and no argument at that time, or I (we) will pay for a taxi to bring you home safely. I (we) expect that a discussion of such an incident would follow at a later time.

Likewise, I (We) as your parent or guardian, agree to seek safe, sober transportation. I (we) will not drive if I (we) have been drinking, nor will I (we) ride with a friend who has been drinking.

_____ (Initial)

_____ (Initial)

6. Legal Penalties.

Under current Maine law, all new drivers under 21 years of age operate with a two-year provisional license. Moving violations such as speeding, failure to obey traffic lights or stop signs, and other reckless driving offenses will result in the loss of the provisional license as follows:

First offense

Loss of license for 30 days

Second Offense

Loss of license for 60 days

Third and subsequent offenses

Loss of License for 90 days

Drivers under 21 years of age who operate with ANY level of blood alcohol are subject to the following penalties:

First Offense

Loss of license for one year

Second and subsequent offenses

Loss of license for two years

If a driver under the age of 21 with any blood alcohol level operates a motor vehicle with any passengers under 21 years of age, an additional *180 day license suspension* is added to the above penalties.

7. Liabilities.

All drivers are legally responsible for their own actions as a driver and vehicle owners may be legally liable for damages caused by any person operating the owner's vehicle.

Parents and young drivers should understand that insurance coverage and rates may be affected by any damages that result from the inappropriate use of the owner's vehicle.

We agree to the terms of this contract, which may be revisited or revised at a later time.

(Signature of Parent or Guardian)

(Signature of Parent or Guardian)

(Signature of Young Driver)

Date